

VOTC – March 2017

## 2. A Bad Fall from God

Hello dear listeners,

As we continue to give thought to what it means to be human, we move ahead from the creation of man to the fall of man. And with that, we come to see that something happened to man's status as "human."

Now, this very statement raises something important that we need to establish before we go any further. I said something happened to *man's* status. If you know anything about the story of the fall of Adam and Eve, you know that *two people* sinned, and thereby *they* became sinful. So why do I say that with the fall into sin, something happened to *man's* status in general?

Shouldn't I rather limit it to Adam and Eve's status?

Adam, the first man to walk this earth, was more than just an image-bearer of God. He had another position. He was also what we call the *head* and *representative* of all those who would be born after him. In some ways it's like a country's president. If a president decides that the nation is to go to war, the nation is by that fact at war. Well, the Lord God appointed Adam to be the head of all who would come from him. And so yes, Adam's fall into sin is humanity's fall. This is how the apostle Paul speaks in Romans 5:18, 19: "One trespass led to condemnation for all men...By the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." The fall in Paradise is when something happened to *humanity's* status as human!

Just how did that happen? After God created man so glorious, he put man on probation. What that means is that God gave man a test, in the Garden of Eden. God wanted to test man's faithfulness, whether man would obey God. And so he said to Adam, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). That, you might say, is test number one. Is Adam going to live out of the abundance God *has* given him in the lush and fertile Garden with every tree for food but one, or is he going to want just a little more? Is Adam going to believe the *goodness* of God, or question it? That's test number one.

There's another test as well. God had told Adam to fill the earth and subdue it, and *have dominion* over every living thing. Well, now there is this slithery, crafty serpent in the Garden. He's the devil in creature form. He has come to tempt Adam and Eve. He has come for combat, warfare. What is Adam's responsibility? Exercise dominion over all creatures, and that includes this serpent, intruder, threat to God's good creation. Is Adam going to obey?

The serpent approaches the woman. And he challenges Eve to defy God. He takes what God said and changes it just a little so that it becomes a lie. He basically says, "Did God really mean that you would die when he said that? If you eat of the tree, you won't die, but your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The serpent is calling into question none other than the reliability of the word of God, and the *goodness* of God.

Well then the moment we see coming takes place. Genesis 3:6, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." Adam was watching this whole conversation develop between the serpent and his wife, and he watched as she transgressed God's command. He had let the serpent go after his wife, and he let her eat. He reneged on his responsibility as the head of his wife, and head of the human race. What he ought to have done was stopped her, and at the same time

rebuke the serpent, “Be gone! You are twisting God’s words.” But no, Adam as head offers no words. Instead, he eats as well!

Then they stand on trial. Genesis 3:9, “The LORD God called to the *man* and said to him, ‘Where are you?’” God calls *Adam*, because he as head is ultimately responsible for what’s happened. Adam of course responds by saying it’s not his own fault, but Eve’s fault. Eve says it’s the serpent’s fault. But even though they were tempted by a serpent, *they* sinned. *They* failed the test. God wanted obedience stemming from love. But they failed. They didn’t live up to their high calling as God’s image-bearers. They put themselves first. They broke the fellowship they enjoyed with God, and brought upon themselves and all mankind *misery*. Man is totally responsible for his fall and disobedience. And so God banished them from his presence. No longer could they walk with him in the cool of the day. The “very good” life that they enjoyed was gone.

The punishment fit the crime. Created in the image of God to know, love, and live with God, they essentially plummeted to their death. Now again, why does all of this matter so much to us today? Because the sin of Adam and Eve, our very first parents, has been passed down from Paradise. Romans 5 says in vs. 12, “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” We all fell at the fall.

And for the sake of a right understanding of just how far-reaching the fall was, we need to consider briefly its effects. They are basically two-fold. First, in Adam, we are *guilty* before God. When Adam sinned before God, God reckoned to us the guilt of Adam’s first sin. We lost our righteous status. We became liable to God’s judgment of death. But secondly, we also became *corrupt*, in every part of our being. We became enslaved to the power of sin. So, we are guilty and corrupt on account of the fall into sin. And therefore, David says in Psalm 51:5, after committing adultery with Bathsheba, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” David understands well that he was included in Adam’s sin and its effects. It’s the same for all humanity, including us. We became sub-human at the fall, alienated from God, children of the devil (John 8:44).

It’s a tough pill to swallow. Our guilt and corruption is the same as Adam’s. That might offend you, bother you, because yes, you and I were not physically there. But it’s the truth. And we need to admit this, dear listeners, and take responsibility for it. Why? Well, not only because it is the truth. But also because of what Paul says further in Romans 5:19: “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” The more you and I see how deep our sinfulness is, the more we see that we are guilty and corrupt, the more we also appreciate how desperately we need to be delivered from ourselves! And that’s what will bring us to the one and only person after Adam who was not conceived and born in sin, but rather in righteousness and holiness. Yes, Paul is directing sinners to Christ. The true man. The real human. More on that next time!